

# Men's Olympic Golf Competition

Sunday, 1 August 2021  
Saitama City, Saitama, Japan  
Kasumigaseki Country Club

## Xander Schauffele

## Rory Sabbatini

## CT Pan

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Take questions, please.

**Q. I wonder if you can just kind of walk us through basically the final hole and how you kept your emotions from getting out of control and making the winning putt.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it was I felt like for the most part of the day I stayed very calm. I usually look very calm but there's something terrible happening inside at times. So I was able to learn on those moments where I've lost coming down the stretch, where I hit a bad shot or a bad wedge or a bad putt and sort of lose my cool. But I felt like today I really, I thought I had a one-shot lead going into 16 or 17 and I looked at the board and I saw Rory shot 61, so that was a nice wake up call for me, thank goodness there was a board there or I wouldn't have known. Yeah, it was a roller coaster day for me especially on that back nine coming in and just happy I could fall back on parts of my game to sort of pull me through.

**Q. We have seen so many times in these games that medalists have to share the moment via screen with their family, the hug with your father, what did it mean what did you guys say to each other what did it represent with your relationship?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I can't really say what we said to each other. That's just -- just from a standpoint of swearing. But it really was it was a nice embrace and I did think of him as soon as I made the putt, I knew he was going to be there crying, luckily he had shades on, but it was really cool. This whole experience has been really, really special and to have him here is even better.

**Q. Xander, a couple questions about your background and I'm sorry if you've been asked this before. I've seen it says your mom she's been described as both Chinese and Taiwanese?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I'm actually, yeah, my fellow countryman right next to me, my mom was born in (Chinese Taipei), so actually by blood I'm half Taiwanese.

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with questions. You said last night that CT stands for Chinese Taipei, that it's in your blood and that you'll give everything today. So what does that result today now mean to you?

CT PAN: Very satisfying. It can come as a surprise to me too. After day one, plus 3, 74, I remember I texted one of my good friends and I was like, the struggle is real. So it's quite a turnaround for this week winning the bronze medal that I couldn't even think about it, didn't even think about it after Thursday's round. So overall that was a very happy ending.

THE MODERATOR: Rory, how remarkable is it considering where you started today to be on this stage right now?

RORY SABBATINI: To be here is amazing. I had the privilege of playing with CT today, so we kind of spurred each other one and he played some fantastic golf and down the end there suddenly I wasn't so worried about Xander I was worried about CT. So I tried to keep my foot on the gas to keep ahead of him. I think that kind of set the stage for us to put a little bit of pressure on Xander without him knowing.

THE MODERATOR: Xander, your Olympic aspirations have been well documented. Now you're here as the gold medalist. What are you feeling?

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Man, it feels good. It really is a special deal, standing on the podium with these two boys, with our flags being raised, the ceremony, I think people talk about why the Olympics are such a special thing to them and we're fortunate enough to be a part of a ceremony and I think we can all see why people say that. So I think we're all very happy to be here right now.

**Q. And her parents were they both Taiwanese as well?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yes. Yeah, but they grew up, my mom grew up in Japan from the age of four. So culturally I understand both and my grandparents have been in Japan ever since.

**Q. And that part of the family is still in Japan right now?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I have split. Family in (Chinese Taipei) and Japan.

**Q. Maybe this is kind of too big a question for a golf press conference, but as obviously Rory's got multiple passports too, as national identities become more of a fluid thing, what kind of effect do you think that will have on the world and maybe the way people interact with each other?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: That's a good question. I think that I can just use myself as an example. I'm the only natural-born citizen in my family, being born in the United States. So I think as a whole if everyone -- everyone that shows up to play the Olympics is very proud to represent their own country, so I think if everyone was very proud of their own country and they show up -- what am I trying to say -- I mean, I think that me being very international it's taught me a lot about different cultures and it's made me very understanding of different cultures. I think that if everyone sort of had the ability to travel more and experience other cultures they would be more willing to get along, potentially.

**Q. Rory, for you, can you go back to the time that I think it was your wife and her cousin approached you with the idea of citizenship for Slovakia. Did you need to be talked into that or were you all in from the start?**

RORY SABBATINI: You know, the ironic part is that at the time my wife's cousin was the vice president of the Slovak Golf Association he's now become the president of the Slovak Golf Association. But at the time the discussions that we had were, you know what, South Africa has so many golfers to represent them, but Slovakia doesn't have anybody to represent them. And we looked at it as a way to use it as a springboard to try and create more interest in the game of golf in Slovakia and to create more interest amongst the junior golfers. Golf in Slovakia is not a big sport in regards to you got ice hockey, you got so many different other sports that are bigger sports. So we looked at it as a way to try and create some interest. For me to be here today is very fortuitous. I'm just thankful to be here. But it's been such a prideful moment to be up there to represent Slovakia and to see the flag raised.

Words really cannot express it. So it's just been a fantastic experience all around for the entire Olympics and I'm just very thankful.

**Q. I asked you Xander, how do you feel now to is have got a gold medal in Japan because you have some roots. Your mother has lived in Japan, so what do you feel?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I feel good. I maybe put more pressure on myself want to go win this more than anything else for quite some time and with my dad this is my dad aspired to have one of that's at some point in his life he dedicated a big chunk of his life for quite some time to obtaining a medal and that was taken away from him. And my ties here with my grandparents living here and my mom growing up here as well, there's just all these things that sort of motivated me to do better, be better. And maybe I put more pressure on myself but it was sort of more than just golf for me and I'm just really, really happy and fortunate to be sitting here.

**Q. What is the meaning or the value of gold medal for you?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: What does it mean to win a gold medal? It means you're the champion. It means you beat everybody. I think we play golf, for me specifically I don't play golf for money or medals, in all honesty, I just play to be competitive and I want to beat everyone. So for this week I'm luckily enough to be sitting here with these boys, but I'm also lucky enough to be the No. 1 player to beat everyone. So that's what it means to me.

**Q. What can you comment about Rory's performance today 10-under amazing performance?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: 10-under with two bogeys usually gets it done. It was very -- Rory added a lot of stress that I didn't need to my finishing holes. He made it very exciting for me and my whole team watching from home and he played an amazing round of golf. I mean both these guys, they said they didn't really have their best coming in and to sort of feed off each other and be sitting up here like I said I think we're all super stoked.

**Q. On 18 when Paul was looking at his putt you were behind your ball and you were crouched but you weren't looking at it you were looking straight down. I'm just wondering if you remember what was going through your mind at that moment?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, there's a time and there's a place to sort of, I think it's okay for your thoughts to sort of venture into the future, that's sort of what our brain does,

unfortunately. I can't get my heart to stop beating even if I tried my best or I wouldn't be sitting here. So I was just thinking about what if I make this putt and all these things and I tip my head down I closed my eyes and I just tried to really become more present and just focus on the 4-footer. Once again I just reminded myself, this is just a 4-footer, all you have to do is make it, no big deal.

**Q. You got off to a great start and you built a cushion. How often did you look at the scoreboard on the back nine and do you wish you hadn't?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Apparently not enough. I was cruising pretty nice, I saw that I had a three-shot lead going into 14 made an absolute mess of the hole. I really tried to keep my head down from that point on and I saw massive board on 16. So the early putts that fell and the good shots were nice for a cushion and it was fortunately just enough for me to squeak by finishing up.

**Q. When you talk about whatever pressure you put on yourself or maybe it's a level of desire to win something, how would you compare the Olympics with any of the other big events, why was it different?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think it was different.

**Q. How is it different?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: I think it's different for a lot of reasons for me personally I haven't won anything in quite some time, that bothered me and my team, they know more than anyone else I've been knocking on the door a lot. And so you kind of get that taste of winning and then it kind of gets swiped from you and you're a little bit sour, even if you're playing really good golf. So for me it was this was a really big point for me in my career I guess to sort of have a lead and be able to sort of cap it off. I haven't done that before, it's a first for me and it was hard. Every time I watch someone do it on TV it looks hard and today was hard and I'm happy to be able to pull it off.

**Q. Could you take us through the decision to change your putting back to your traditional stroke and secondly, you've been here so many times, when you got off the plane in Japan was there just a comfort level that maybe other people didn't have?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, it is. It's actually a good point. I think coming here there's always a -- when you open a suitcase, you can always kind of smell sort of where you come from. And I can always tell whenever my grandparents, a long time ago, used to travel to San Diego when I was living with my parents as a kid, it always smelled like Japan. I don't know how to describe it. But

every time I come here I really appreciate the culture and how kind and respectful everyone is and I think I speak for everyone and all the players in this field and so there was a level of comfort for me. And I can't remember your first question.

**Q. Your putting.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Oh the putting. Yeah, I switched because the arm lock was a little too slow, I guess, I couldn't hit putts hard enough over in Europe, during The Open Championship and the Scottish. And then, I mean, it's seemingly an easy switch for me going from lock to not. I mean, if you look down the line you wouldn't be able to tell which putter I have in. So I kind of got some good feels back with my putter at the Open Championship and so my caddie and I decided to run with it this week.

**Q. Have you ever been in a playoff of that many players? And then also obviously the bronze medal means a lot, but to beat the level of Rory McIlroy and Hideki Matsuyama and Collin Morikawa and level of players that was in that playoff, take all that have combined and what does it mean?**

CT PAN: Yeah, I mean I've never been in a playoff with that many people, seven people for one spot. Which is pretty crazy. And if you look at the field in the playoff we got Rory McIlroy, Collin, we got I don't know two, three top-10 guys in the world. And we got me, 200 ranked, shooting plus 4 on day one, didn't know what to do on Thursday. But anyway, I mean I just told myself, just keep my head down, hit one shot at a time and then I just remind myself just to keep joking with my wife, she's great, she's great caddie, but she definitely keeps the mood very light for me and it helps me to focus more. So I want to thank her for that. And the playoff, it's crazy.

**Q. You said on NBC you wanted to win this for your dad. Can you just elaborate on that and how much is that just him being your father versus your swing coach versus his history.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, he wears a lot of hats. Fortunately he wears fewer hats as I get older, makes his life a little less stressful. Yeah, I mean he's been my -- I have never really had a mental coach, he's been my only swing coach, and as the mentor you sort of feed off your personal examples to give to someone younger than you or older. And his were all Olympic related. He put all his eggs in one basket for quite some time, just like I did for golf to compete as a decathlete in the Olympics. And life came at him fast, it was swiped away from him, but he saw potential in me to become a good golfer and so he sort of

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

put all his eggs in my basket. And so for this to come full circle at a pretty young age I just feel very fortunate and just really happy to share this with him.

**Q. With your nine top 10s in majors it's easy to forget you're still 27 sometimes. So just wondering with what you just referred to you never really in any of those had this situation like you had to handle today. Do you think it's an important part of your development because it's a tournament that you really, really wanted and could help in some major when you're like really old and 30 years old or something?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Sure. For me money, medals, trophies, those are all things that come as a result. As a competitor, personally it's always important to take the next step and I was kind of stuck in a gear getting, over thinking over complicating certain moments. So if you put just everything aside for me personally this is just a big deal just to sort of pull through while having the lead since I have never done it before.

**Q. Rory, could you talk about this morning and did you think that you could, A, shoot a 61 and B, with as that going to be enough to get where you are now?**

RORY SABBATINI: You want the honest truth or the fake truth?

**Q. No, the real truth is good.**

RORY SABBATINI: The honest truth is I had probably one of the worse warmups I've ever had in my golfing career. I couldn't find the golf ball and the club face to match them up at all. And to such a respect that I was like, okay, I'm done warming up. It just was like, okay, I guess I'll try to find it out there. Somehow I managed to find it. Did I think I had 10-under in me today? After yesterday, not a chance. But in all honesty, we actually had a very relaxed environment in my group. I had my wife on my bag caddieing for me and CT had his wife on the bag for him. And we just had a, we had a relaxed day. I think in a sense I thought I was so far out of it I didn't have any expectations so I just went and kind of went back to how I used to be when I was in my 20s and played aggressive golf. Obviously I'm in the twilight of my career, so my opportunities to be back here in this position are few and slim. But obviously two young guys, great golfers, CT. Probably one of the most underrated golfers I know, Xander, never mind his golf game, probably one of the nicest gentlemen I've ever met. Always hospitable, you can tell he was raised right, he's just got a great head on his shoulders and a great player. But his golfing talents are just unbelievable. So I'm just proud to be sitting here alongside him.

**Q. Xander, as you keep talking about the fact that you got it done here today, do you see this in any way, shape or form as a justification or a springboard going forward?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: It's as simple as it's like riding a bike, you don't really know until you get on it and you can start riding it. So for me I just, I needed to get over the hump, I needed to sort of win while having a lead and I would really compare the two. It's something that you find all these mental things, cue, to sort of get your head in the right place, but at the end of the day you look at all the guys who win, they just kind of just get it done. They just are clutch in certain areas and whether it's scrambling are driving or iron play. So for me I'm just happy just to get it done.

**Q. Given your family background that you talked about, in some ways was this a win for Japan as well as the United States?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Yeah, I mean I got my dad's -- yeah we got a worldly deal. France, Germany, (Chinese Taipei), a little bit of Japan. I don't, I can't speak for the Japanese people, I'm sure my grand parents are very happy. They may be the only people in Japan pulling for me other than Hideki Matsuyama. So they're very proud, a proud people and I think that's why they do such a good job maintaining everything and making sure everything's really perfect. So I'm just happy to have this one for my team.

**Q. I know you had hoped that a couple dozen of your family members would be out here if fans were allowed and I know you were hoping to maybe see your grand parents. Have you received any clarity about that and what do your post-victory plans look like?**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: Well, it's looking a little bit late, 8 o'clock's the closing call for alcohol sales currently in Japan due to COVID. So hopefully my boys or someone got some alcohol. I would be happy to share it with these boys here. But, yeah, I mean, I don't know about the situation with my grandparents. I can only hope to see them if I can and if not then it is what it is.

**Q. One little round question, I would be curious what was going through your head when your ball was in flight on 14 and when you actually got around to seeing it through all that vegetation.**

XANDER SCHAUFFELE: When it was in the air it was oh, beep. And then I thought I saw it drop down. They were looking in the bushes. Here's the thing, when you're trying

to win a golf tournament you need things to go your way. To me that was a very stupid thing I did maybe potentially. I tried to hit it through a gap, I hit a tree, I missed the gap completely and my ball literally shot through like three different trees to get out to advance. So that was my lucky moment of the day. Stupid or not. No guts, no glory I guess is what they say, but that could have easily hit the tree and gone straight out of bounds again and I probably wouldn't even be on this podium.

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